

Online Sunday Service Grows Congregation By 50%

By Russell Duckworth

At Unity Church of Dallas we share two services on Sunday morning. During February of 2007 we also shared 1,964 individual “service” audio experiences on our website and podcast. By investing an extra hour on Sunday afternoon, we create a third, virtual service that increases our congregation by almost 50%.

We do it by creating a ministry that is free of the physical limitations of space and time. We reach out and share our Sunday morning experience and message with kindred spirits all around the world. Your ministry can do it, too. Right now, someone out there is searching to experience your unique and powerful energy. Are you willing to share the experience with them?

Expand the Ministry, Maximize the Message

Many ministries already capture services for their members to share on cassette and CD. It can be a simple, five-minute process to take your service CD and convert the minister’s message into a web-friendly format that is easily linked from your website, shared as a podcast, or even linked from an electronic newsletter emailed to your virtual congregants.

Posting audio files of your services to your website is a great way to allow prospective congregants to sample your message before visiting your center or church, and podcasts are an easy, powerful, and popular tool for sharing your message with an increasingly mobile audience. Podcasts can be accessed from a web browser, using a podcasting service like Apple® iTunes. Newer versions of Microsoft® Outlook can receive podcasts directly, and there’s really nothing more slick than listening to your podcast on TiVo®.

Get in the Flow of Giving and Receiving

Your website is an important tool for providing information to those searching for your ministry. How are you reaching out to your virtual congregation?

Think about asking your members and visitors to allow you to send information

It can be a simple, five-minute process to take your service online.

The screenshot shows the Unity Church of Dallas website for March 22, 2007. The header includes the church name and a link to their website. The main content area features two articles: 'Life is Like iTunes' by Rev. Kurt Condra, Associate Minister, and 'The Lizard of Tarsus' by Jim Grimsley. The 'Life is Like iTunes' article includes a photo of Rev. Condra and a 'read more' link. The 'The Lizard of Tarsus' article includes a 'Listen to ministers' talks' button and a 'iTunes podcast' button. At the bottom, there is a sign-up form for email updates.

events directly to their email inbox. You might be surprised at the value of adding electronic communications.

One-to-one connections can be driven by periodic electronic newsletters featuring class or service information, special events information, or a minister's message.

Unity Church of Dallas sends about nine-thousand emails per month. About a third of that audience clicks through to view content on our website.

Gratefully accepting tithes and contributions in support of your virtual ministry is an important part of the flow of abundance.

Measuring Success

How do you measure success? Any combination of factors: Number of visitors to your website. Number of listeners to your podcast. Dollars contributed online.

Maybe. What about the possibility that your message reaches out to that one person in a digital, divine, perfect moment and transforms his/her life? What if your message touches just one person?



Russell Duckworth is guru of all things technical at Unity Church Dallas. Each week the ministers, staff, and incredible volunteers create a warm and welcoming environment for one thousand congregants and members.